

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by residents of District 46 who are also community leaders in Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore. SURJ is a group of community members supporting local groups working for greater racial justice in Baltimore and the State of Maryland. We are also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland. We are testifying in **support of Senate Bill 486**.



Senate Bill 486, known as the Maryland Essential Workers' Protection Act guarantees safe working conditions, hazard pay, the right to refuse dangerous work, access to testing, and paid sick/bereavement leave during a prolonged State of Emergency. Your support of this bill shows essential workers that we value their service.

It is clear that like many social ills, coronavirus is especially prevalent among BIPOC due to systemic racism built into our healthcare and workforce system. Immigrant families and undocumented families, especially, have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Despite working on the front lines in healthcare and other crucial service industries, they continue to be excluded from state unemployment, state healthcare, and the federal CARES Act. The folks who have kept our society functional during this crisis are the most at-risk, because their jobs can't be done from home, because they don't have access to all the resources they need to stay healthy, and because their employers sometimes compel them to risk unsafe conditions without protective equipment or give up their jobs. No one should have to choose between risking death from coronavirus and being unemployed.

No doubt we can all agree that our health care workers are real heroes, risking their lives to care for and save the lives of other Marylanders who have fallen sick; we need to make sure that we are respecting their sacrifices by going to the distance to give them the support they need right now. We should also recognize that a lot of essential workers, who have kept on the job throughout the pandemic, have played an equally important role and are in need of protection too. Unfortunately a lot of people are unable to afford to buy their own personal protective equipment, pay for coronavirus testing, or take unpaid time off to self-isolate or quarantine. In addition, there are workplaces that are not willing to follow basic pandemic safety measures or provide masks and hand hygiene supplies to their employees unless they are compelled to do so.

Frontline workers need critical workplace protections to ensure their health and safety. With over 7,000 deaths related to COVID-19 in Maryland, it is a matter of life and death. **Without policies like these, more people die.**

It is for these reasons that we are encouraging you to **support Senate Bill 486**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

SURJ District 46 Community Leaders
Sarah Goldman

Christina Pham Linhoff
Ben Goldberg
Liz Simon-Higgs
Brian Seel
Lilly Chappa
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